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2009-06-29

Shell says some output shut in by Nigeria Forcados attack

Cape Town (Platts)--29Jun2009

Shell said Monday some oil production had been shut in following an attack on its Forcados offshore platform in the Delta state in Nigeria, a claim denied by security forces.

"We have received reports of an attack on two well clusters at Estuary field in the western swamp operations. Some production has been shut in as a precautionary measure while we investigate to determine what really happened," a Shell spokeswoman said.

Nigeria's main militant group, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta, earlier Monday said it had attacked the Forcados platform and that clusters 11 and 30 were engulfed in fire after a "massive explosion."

"Hurricane Piper Alpha has struck at the Shell Forcados offshore platform in Delta state today, Monday, June 29, 2009, at about 03:30 hours," the group said in an e-mail.

The MEND statement also said it had sunk a gunboat with between 20 and 23 soldiers on board.

A Joint Task Force spokesman denied its forces had clashed with MEND fighters.

"The pipelines MEND said they attacked are isolated and not manned by JTF personnel. So there could not have been any confrontation with militants," spokesman Colonel Rabe Abubakar said.

The military launched a major offensive against armed groups in the Niger delta last month, bombarding their camps from the air and sea and sending in battalions of soldiers.

Four armed groups' leaders, including a militia commander in the main oil city Port Harcourt, Ateke Tom, have agreed to accept a government offer of amnesty in return for disarming. MEND, which claims to be fighting for a greater share of the nation's oil wealth, is not among the group of four.

OUTPUT LOST FROM EARLIER ATTACK

Shell said on June 18 that some oil production had been halted following an attack on the Trans Ramos pipeline at Aghoro-2 community in Bayelsa. The damaged pipeline supplies crude to the Forcados terminal.

The company had already declared force majeure on Forcados oil loadings for the rest of June through July because of previous damage to another major trunk line in the Chanomi Creek area of Delta state.

Militants bombed the Forcados oil tanker loading platform in February 2006, forcing Shell to suspend output. Forcados can pump about 380,000 b/d.

For more news about Nigerian oil production, please see Platts' web feature at <http://www.platts.com/Oil/Resources/News%20Features/nigeriaoil09/index.xml>

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